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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

25X1A

COUNTRY Colombia

SUBJECT Conservative Party Split/Labor Unions

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SUPP. TO
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- 25X1X 1. We do not believe that the health of Laureano Gomez would permit him to resume his duties as president even if he wished to do so. However he is the "power behind the throne" in the administration and Acting President Urdaneta is his puppet. Incidentally, the strongly Conservative, but pro-Ospina Perez, Medellin daily El Colombiano was suppressed for three days from 27 Apr 53 for printing this statement. We had proof of President Gomez' authority on the weekend of 2/3 May. Guerrillas had made an attack [redacted] at Providencia in Antioquia [redacted] and we were trying to obtain military protection [redacted] in the area. The local military were reluctant to move without orders from Bogota and because it was a weekend we could not reach any of the competent authorities there. Our [redacted] representative therefore called President Gomez on the telephone and explained the situation. The President undertook to do the necessary and the desired orders were issued the same day.
- 25X1X 2. The Conservative party appears to be hopelessly split internally between supporters of the administration and those of former president Ospina Perez, the administration adherents representing the extreme right wing of the party and the Ospina supporters the more liberal elements. Conservatives in Antioquia, and especially in Medellin, who are made up principally of industrialists and merchants, support Ospina. For business reasons, they are desperately anxious to see normal conditions restored and believe Ospina might be able to heal the breach between Conservatives

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and Liberals. They recall that Ospina made a real effort to conduct a bipartisan government when he was president.

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3. We do not see any reason to expect the pro-government Conservatives to accept Ospina. Gomez made his first public appearance in months to deliver a speech on (or about) 20 Apr 53 in which he belittled in sarcastic words Ospina's administration and achievements. Colombians seldom change their politics and it would be unrealistic to expect Ospina to receive active Liberal support but it is more probable that he would receive passive support from many Liberals than that he would be supported by the Gomez faction.
 4. While the industrialists and merchants in Medellin are Conservatives, there is a large Liberal element made up of employees and workers in the plants; and the rural areas of Antioquia are predominantly Liberal. The party organization in Medellin, however, has disintegrated, and there are no signs as yet [Apr-May 53] of its being rebuilt.
 5. We have noted elsewhere [redacted] reports current in the rural areas of Antioquia that the army may take over the government in a move to restore order. Such a move would be popular in the rural areas afflicted by the present disorders but we heard nothing in Bogota or in Medellin to suggest any real likelihood of such a development.
 6. We have had no labor difficulties during the past year [May 52 - May 53]. This may be because we have been reducing staff and naturally have eliminated malcontents. Our company unions are still vaguely affiliated with Confederacion Trabajadores de Colombia [CTC]. The Conservative Union Trabajadores de Colombia [UTC], backed by the church, is actively proselytizing and is slowly gaining adherents from CTC. The Argentine sponsored ATLAS does not appear to have had any success in Colombia.

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